

ANTH 2111
Term 1, 2025/26

Lecturer: Dr. Tim Rosenkranz
Office: NAH324
timrosenkranz@cuhk.edu.hk
Office Hour: By appointment

Lecture: Wednesday 9:30 AM – 11:15 AM (UCC C3)
Tutorial 1: Wednesday 11:30 AM – 12:15 PM (UCC C3)
Tutorial 2: Wednesday 12:30 PM – 1:15 PM (UCA 111)
Tutorial 3: Wednesday 2:30 PM – 3:15 PM (NAH401)

TA: LAI Hang Man

Contemporary Anthropological Theory

The second half of the 20th century was marked by real world challenges to anthropological theory. Anthropologists began questioning the biases and power relations embedded in representation of others and the researcher's positionality in ethnographic accounts. As a result, anthropology saw a rise of theories that critically accounted for the salience of colonialism, gender, class, ethnicity, race, and nationality, not only among the people studied by anthropologists but also among anthropologists themselves.

Although not at all a comprehensive overview of all contemporary theories, this course will give a selection of a new theoretical diversity: from postcolonial theory, subaltern studies, postmodernism, poststructuralism, theories of body and embodiment, and gender to queer theory, agency and structure, actor-network theory, and globalization, migration, and citizenship. Each week explores major theoretical debates and ongoing controversies that emerge from different scholarly views on how to make sense of the changing world and what should be the position of anthropologists within it. Thus, we will learn how anthropologists think and write about social formations and human experience, describing the complexity of ordinary and exceptional moments of life.

Learning Objectives:

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- name key theorists in anthropology and other disciplines who have influenced the development of anthropology in the second half of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century
- identify major anthropological theories, concepts, genres, and debates of this period
- explain the strengths and weaknesses of the examined theories and theoretical concepts
- provide examples of the application of the examined theories to ethnographic studies and the everyday life

Course Format:

This course is conducted in lecture and tutorial format. The lecture will introduce the required readings and discuss key passages, but it will not give a detailed summary of the readings. It is therefore essential that you do the required readings before class and come prepared. The lecture will be interactive with more room for your questions and discussion. The tutorial is an extension of the lecture based on the student's needs and interests.

Physical presence in all lectures and tutorials is a basic requirement for this course and counts towards participation. Excused absences are generally only permitted with a medical doctor's note or in case of a personal emergency. If you have to miss class, please e-mail me beforehand. It is your responsibility to obtain notes from your fellow students about the missed sessions. There will be no transcript or recording of the lecture or tutorial provided afterwards, so please take notes.

Readings:

This course mostly uses a reader which gives a short introduction to the thematic block and then offers 3-5 short excerpts from original text in conversation. The reader is available as e-book in the Library, but **all readings will be made available as PDFs on Blackboard.**

Reader: Bolles, A.L., Gomberg-Muñoz, R., Perley, B.C., Brondo, K.V. (eds). 2022. *Anthropological Theory for the Twenty-First Century: A Critical Approach*. University of Toronto Press, Toronto Buffalo London. – called “Reader” in syllabus.

Requirements and Assessment:

The following are the required assignments that will be graded:

Participation + Reading Responses (20%): Participation includes doing the readings (as required, see below), coming to all the lectures and tutorials, asking questions, joining in on class-discussion or posting in the discussion board (on blackboard). --- **Reading Responses:** You need to do three reading responses (two before the midterm exam, one after). Each is a response to one of the readings. They should be no longer than 150 words and pose a question or critique you have about the reading (no summary). Each response has to be posted before the corresponding lecture in the discussion section on blackboard.

2x Take-Home-Exams (40% each): The take-home exams will require you to use the readings to write a paper (1000 - 1500 words) in response to given questions. **The exams are due on Oct. 28th and December 7th (before midnight).** The questions will be posted on blackboard in week 8 and week 14 of the class. The exams need to be submitted in the assignments on blackboard together with a signed veriguide statement.

VeriGuide requirements: Students are required by university policy to submit all exam papers to VeriGuide (https://academic.veriguide.org/academic/login_CUHK.jspx). A take-home-exam assignment without a signed declaration from VeriGuide will not be graded.

Grade Descriptors (Course Specific Descriptor):

A: Outstanding performance on all learning outcomes.

(The work has creatively synthesized course materials and key ideas in an original way. The argument is logical and cohesive, the discussion is well-organized, and the writing is clear. The work goes beyond merely summarizing key ideas. The work clearly differentiates between the position of the author versus the position(s) the author wishes to challenge. Concrete evidence corresponds to statements and claims).

A-: Generally outstanding performance on all (or almost all) learning outcomes.

(The work synthesizes course materials and key ideas in an original way, but there are areas for improvement).

B: Substantial performance on all learning outcomes, OR high performance on some learning outcomes which compensates for less satisfactory performance on others, resulting in overall substantial performance.

(The work demonstrates a solid grasp of course materials and key ideas. There are areas for improvement with respect to building a cohesive argument, organizing the discussion, communicating clearly, and/or identifying relevant evidence. There is some confusion over what position the author has taken versus the position(s) the author wishes to challenge).

C: Satisfactory performance on the majority of learning outcomes, possibly with a few

weaknesses.

(The work shows some effort, but course materials have not been sufficiently engaged or the paper fails to directly address the prompt. The argument and the writing is not clear).

D: Barely satisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes.

(The work shows little effort to engage course materials. There are major problems with clarity of argument and writing).

F: Unsatisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes, OR failure to meet specified assessment requirements.

(The work has failed respond to the assignment prompt).

AI Policy: All use of AI tools is prohibited

In any kind of learning activity or assessment that will be counted towards the final course grades (or used for evaluating attainment of the desired learning outcomes), students are not allowed to submit work which is produced with the collaboration of or supported by the use of any AI tools (e.g. ChatGPT, etc.)

Improper/unauthorized use of AI tools in learning activities and assessments will constitute acts of academic dishonesty and will be handled according to the University's *Procedures for Handling Cases of Academic Dishonesty*.

Policies and Support:

- **Technology Use:** Please be respectful and do not distract yourself and your fellow students. Students are only allowed to use their tablets or laptops in class to take notes. Please do not use your devices for non-class related activities. Mobile phones must be turned on silent (not vibrate).
- **Educational Technology:** This class relies on the use of Blackboard. All required class readings, the out-of-class assignment submissions, as well as announcements will be done through it. Note that it uses the email address assigned to you by the University, so it is your responsibility to have an electronic mail forwarded to your main email address.

- **Respectful Conduct and Discussion Rules:** We will discuss many interesting and important topics. While I encourage thoughtful, engaged, and controversial discussion, I expect you to be polite and respectful of your classmates' opinions, limit your statements to academic (not emotional) arguments, and not use offensive language or judgmental statements. Please give each other time to talk, do not interrupt, and most importantly listen to each other.
- **Late Submission:** Late submission will suffer a fraction of a grade per day. For example, an A will become an A-.
- **Academic Honesty and Plagiarism:** Academic honesty is crucial and plagiarism is a serious offense. The university has recently updated its policies on Academic Integrity and the penalties for plagiarism and cheating:
http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/Eng_hm_files_%282013-14%29/p06.htm. You are required to cite properly (guidelines: <http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/ant/tstyle.doc> and http://www.ilc.cuhk.edu.hk/english/resource/referencing_avoidingplagiarism1.pdf) to avoid plagiarism. Any use of AI-based writing programs (such as ChatGPT) is not allowed and is considered plagiarism. Please do not hesitate to talk to me and ask questions about this.
- **Independent Learning Center:** If you need help with communication and learning skills, the University has a great resource for you. You can schedule a consultation or attend workshops on various strategies for improving learning outcomes
<https://www.ilc.cuhk.edu.hk/EN/mission.aspx>
- **Special Accommodation:** If you need special accommodations or classroom modifications, you need to notify both me and the University's Wellness and Counseling Center (<https://www2.osa.cuhk.edu.hk/disability/en-GB>) no later than the third week of class.

Course Schedule

Week 1 (Sep 3): Why Contemporary Theory?

Introduction. No readings.

Week 2 (Sep 10): Thinking about Theory

Abu-Lughod, Lila. 2008. "Speaking about Theory". In: *A History of Anthropological Theory* (3rd edition). Paul Ericksen and Liam Murphy (eds). University of Toronto Press, Toronto.

Hage, Ghassan. 2016. "Towards an Ethics of the Theoretical Encounter". In: *Reader*: pp. 405 - 409.

Week 3 (Sep 17): History, Power, and Inequality

Reader:

- Section Four: On History, Power, and Inequality (pp. 87 – 89);
- 4.3 "The World in 1400", Eric Wolf;
- 4.4 "Making Empire Respectable: The Politics of Race and Sexual Morality in Twentieth- Century Colonial Cultures", Ann L. Stoler;
- 4.5 "An Anthropology of Structural Violence", Paul Farmer (pp. 97 – 110)

Week 4 (Sep 24): Colonialism and Anthropological 'Others'

Reader:

- Section Six: On Colonialism and Anthropological "Others";
- 6.1 "Learning to Be an Anthropologist and Remaining "Native", Beatrix Medicine;
- 6.2 "Knowing the Oriental", Edward W. Said;
- 6.3 "Anthropologies of the South: Their Rise, Their Silencing, Their Characteristics", Esteban Krotz;
- 6.4 "Anthropology and the Savage Slot: Poetics and Politics of Otherness", Michel-Rolph Trouillot;
- 6.5 "Our Sea of Islands", Epeli Hau'Ofa (147 – 172)

+++ Week 5 (Oct 1): No Class because of National Day +++

Week 6 (Oct 8): State Power and Citizenship

Reader:

- Section Twelve: On State Power (329 – 331);
- 12.2 "What the Border Hides: Partition and Gender Politics of Irish Nationalism," Begoña Aretxaga;
- 12.4 "Necropolitics," Achille Mbembé;
- 12.5 "Strange Fruit: Brazil, Necropolitics, and the Transnational Resonance of Torture and Death," Christen Smith (pp. 337 – 358)

- 10.3 “Mutations in Citizenship,” Aihwa Ong (pp. 277 - 283)

Week 7 (Oct 15): Agency and Struggle

Reader:

- Section Thirteen: On Agency and Social Struggle;
- 13.1 “The Subject of Freedom,” Saba Mahmood;
- 13.2 “Speaking like a Model Minority: “FOB” Styles, Gender, and Racial Meanings among Desi Teens in Silicon Valley,” Shalini Shankar;
- 13.3 “Subjects or Agents? Camps, Contests, and the Creation of “Political Space,” Victoria Redclift;
- 13.5 “Consent’s Revenge,” Audra Simpson (pp 359 – 390)

Week 8 (Oct 22): Social Position and Ethnographic Authority

Reader:

- Section Nine: On Social Position and Ethnographic Authority
- 9.1 “Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective,” Donna Haraway
- 9.2 “Anthropology and the Oppressed: A Reflection on “Native” Anthropology,” Delmos J. Jones
- 9.3 “What Did You Do Today? Notes from a Politically Engaged Anthropologist,” DÁna-ain Davis
- 9.4 “Fieldwork in Shared Spaces: Positionality, Power, and Ethics of Citizen Anthropologists in Southern Africa,” Heike Becker, Emile Boonzaier, and Joy Owen; (pp. 233 – 256)

+++ Posting of questions for take-home-exam (due by the end of Oct. 28th) +++

+++ Week 9 (Oct 29): No Class because of Double Ninth Festival +++

Week 10 (Nov 5): Writing Cultures

James Clifford, “Partial Truths.” *Writing Culture*, (1986)’. In: *Readings for a History of Anthropological Theory (5th Edition)*. Paul Ericksen and Liam Murphy (eds). University of Toronto Press, Toronto. 2017 [selection: pp. 560 – 564].

Reader:

- Section Five: On Writing Cultures (pp. 113 – 116);
- 5.3 “Grief and a Headhunter’s Rage,” Renato Rosaldo;
- 5.4 “Writing against Culture,” Lila Abu-Lughod;
- 5.5 “Sensuous Stories in the Indian Ocean Islands,” Rosabelle Boswell (pp. 126 - 145)

Week 11 (Nov 12): Human-Environment Relations

Reader:

- Section Eleven: On Environment, Pluriverse, and Power (pp. 297 – 300);
- 11.2 “Translation, Value, and Space: Theorizing an Ethnographic and Engaged Environmental Anthropology,” Paige West;
- 11.3 “Indigenizing the Anthropocene,” Zoe Todd;
- 11.4 “Excerpt from Designs for the Pluriverse: Radical Interdependence, Autonomy, and the Making of Worlds,” Arturo Escobar;
- 11.5 “Complicity and Resistance in the Indigenous Amazon: Economía Indígena under Siege; Alaka Wali (pp. 305 – 328)

Week 12 (Nov 19): Anthropology and Gender

Reader:

- Section Seven: On Anthropology and Gender;
- 7.1 “Introduction to The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State: In the Light of the Researches of Lewis H. Morgan, by Friedrich Engels,” Eleanor Burke Leacock
- 7.2 “Toward a Unified Analysis of Gender and Kinship,” Sylvia Junko Yanagisako and Jane Fishburne Collier;
- 7.3 “Excerpt from Male Daughters, Female Husbands: Gender and Sex in an African Society,” Ifi Amadiume;
- 7.5 “In Search of Masculinity: Violence, Respect, and Sexuality among Puerto Rican Crack Dealers in East Harlem,” Philippe Bourgois (pp. 175 – 201)

Week 13 (Nov 26): Queering Anthropological Knowledge

Reader:

- Section Eight: On Queering Anthropological Knowledge Production;
- 8.1 “Excerpt from The History of Sexuality,” Michel Foucault;
- 8.2 “Romancing the Transgender Native: Rethinking the Use of the “Third Gender” Concept,” Evan B. Towle and Lynn M. Morgan;
- 8.3 “Transgender History, Homonormativity, and Disciplinarity,” Susan Stryker;
- 8.4 “One Way or Another: Erotic Subjectivity in Cuba,” Jafari Allen (pp. 203 – 230)

Week 14 (Dec 1—Make-up session): Dark Anthropology or Anthropology of the Good?

- Ortner, Sherry B. 2016. “Dark Anthropology and Its Others: Theory since the Eighties.” *HAU* 6 (1): 47–73.

+++ Posting of questions for take-home-exam (due by the end of Dec 7th) +++